

bipartisan bill. Senator LIEBERMAN and Senator COLLINS, an Independent and Republican, have acknowledged they want to bring this bill forward, and they have it done, so we will bring it to the floor. We have all our Appropriations bills, and we have to do those. So we have a lot to do to accomplish even a fraction of our to-do list, and it is going to take more cooperation and less conflict. Not everything has to be a knock-down, drag-out fight as it was on this highway bill. To think we wasted 3 weeks on a matter dealing with the health of women in America, but we did. So we stand ready to work with our Republican colleagues.

The Republican leader mentioned the small business jobs bill. We have been trying to do one for a long time. We are going to do a small business jobs bill. The House bill is not perfect. We are glad it is moving forward, and we are going to try to do something here to match so we can get it to conference and get this done.

I am hopeful that when Democrats reach across the aisle, we will find willing partners on the other side for a change.

I thank the Chair. I ask that the Chair announce the business of the day.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period of morning business for 1 hour, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the majority controlling the first half and the Republicans controlling the second half.

The Senator from Washington.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I come to the floor to join my colleagues to mark International Women's Day. This day, which across the globe is celebrated in many different ways, is, at its core, a day to reflect on the achievements of women in politics, business, and society. It is a day to reflect on what a woman's role was in the not-so-distant past and to celebrate how far we have come. But, unfortunately, on this International Women's Day in the year 2012, we cannot celebrate the progress we have made without also acknowledging the unsettling truth that that progress is under threat.

Today a shadow has been cast over this day of celebration by efforts to turn back the clock in Washington, DC,

and across the country, efforts we all must fight against. Only 1 week ago in the Senate, we had a debate on the ability for women across this country to access contraceptives. It is a debate most women believed was settled half a century ago and one we had all hoped was in the past. However, in a scene that was eerily reminiscent of half a century ago, last week one woman brave enough to come forward and give voice to the importance of birth control was targeted. First, her story of a friend's battle with ovarian cancer was purposely left out of a House hearing on women's health. Then, as we have all heard, she was scorned and ridiculed by a rightwing pundit.

It was a galvanizing and eye-opening moment for millions of women in our country. It was a reminder that some still see women as easy targets, and it awakened many women to the fact that the gains we are meant to celebrate on a day such as today could easily be lost to political strategy that preys on women.

For many of those who watched the last few weeks play out, it may have seemed an isolated incident. It could appear to some as a sudden and swift effort by some Republicans—who thankfully have been blocked for the time being—but that is not case. The truth is, women's access to care has rarely been at greater risk. From the moment they came into power, the Republicans in the House of Representatives have been waging a war on women's health.

If you don't believe me, look at the very first bills they introduced when they arrived. They campaigned across the country in the last election on a platform of jobs and the economy, but the first three bills they introduced when they got here were direct attacks on women's health. The very first one, H.R. 1, would have totally eliminated title X funding for family planning and teen pregnancy prevention. The amendment also included defunding Planned Parenthood and cutting off support for the millions of women who count on it. Another one of their bills would have permanently codified the Hyde amendment and the DC abortion ban.

Finally, they introduced a bill that would have rolled back every single one of the gains we made for women in the health care reform bill. That Republican bill would have removed the caps on out-of-pocket expenses that literally protect women from losing their homes or their life savings if they get sick. It would have ended the ban on lifetime limits on coverage, which is so important to everyone. It would have allowed insurance companies to once again discriminate against women by charging them higher premiums than men or even denying women care because of so-called preexisting conditions they had, such as pregnancy. It would have rolled back the guarantee of insurance companies' coverage of contraceptives.

Republicans have shown they will go to just about any length to limit access

to women's care, even shutting down the Federal Government. That may seem extreme to all, but that is exactly what happened 1 year ago when Republicans nearly shut down the Federal Government over a rider that was yet another attempt to go after title X and Planned Parenthood. I remember sitting in those meetings late at night, after months of negotiations over the numbers in the budget, astonished that Republicans were willing to throw all those negotiations away over one issue, and that was their attack on women's health.

The attack on women's rights is not just taking place in the Nation's Capital. In State after State across the country, legislators bent on putting politics between women and their health care are undoing years of important work. A recently enacted law in Texas not only strips women of their rights but of their dignity. It is a law about which Nicholas Kristof of the New York Times recently wrote a column.

I ask unanimous consent to have the article written by Nicholas Kristof, "When States Abuse Women," printed in the RECORD at the conclusion of my remarks.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(See exhibit 1.)

Mrs. MURRAY. It is a law that all women across the country should be insulted by and outraged over. Today, nearly 40 years after *Roe v. Wade* was passed, a woman in Texas who seeks an abortion—one of the most difficult choices a woman and her family can face—is not met with compassion and care but with humiliation, and that is because they have passed a law by Republicans that she is now subjected, against her will, to a vaginal ultrasound. Then she is instructed to listen to a fetal heartbeat, watch the ultrasound and numerous other State-mandated hurdles and then she has to go home and wait 24 hours before she can access a health care procedure that was made a right for women four decades ago.

One would think that after 2 years spent railing against any government involvement in health care, Republicans would not want the State to dictate procedures a doctor must perform on a woman, whether she wants them or not, but then you would be confused because, clearly, when it comes to women and their health care choices, these Republicans are willing to do whatever it takes for them to call the shots—not the women, not their doctors, not their families. The sad part is other States across the country are now contemplating similar laws.

So the threats to women's health care are very real and they are growing. We saw it on a panel on contraceptives in the House that didn't include a woman on the panel. We saw it in a young woman being called horrible names for telling the stories of a friend